TRANSFER AND COMPLETION
SIX-YEAR COMPLETION RATES: TENNESSEE

Among first-time students enrolled in Tennessee Community Colleges in 2004, percentage who graduated within six years, by race/ethnicity

What Is Measured?
Percentage of students who graduated within six years

Who Is Counted?
First-time students who entered Tennessee Community Colleges in summer or fall 2004

What It Tells Us
Among first-time students enrolled in Tennessee Community Colleges in 2004, about 30 percent graduated by 2009-10. Overall, white students were about three times as likely to graduate from any institution as African American students (34 percent vs. 11 percent).

Why It’s Important
At community colleges, graduation means attainment of a certificate or associate degree. However, many students attend community colleges to take lower-division courses for a bachelor’s degree, and some transfer to a four-year institution without obtaining a credential. From the perspective of the community college, these students have finished a curriculum that prepared them for transfer and, therefore, should be considered as having completed. Some states even track and report which community college students graduate from other institutions. Most sources, however, do not specify what proportion of transfer students have finished the coursework required for upper-division standing at the four-year college, and research suggests that many students transfer without reaching this threshold (Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009, table 3). A completion rate that combines transfer and degree attainment is sometimes referred to as a “success rate.”

ABOUT THE DATA
Data are from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission’s Student Information System. Data on first-time freshmen in summer and fall 2004 were matched with data on students who graduated in 2009–2010. Results by race/ethnicity were only reported for white and African American students and for students who graduated from any institution.

DATA SOURCE